Christian Community

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Christian Commitment and the World Community

A Statement Adopted by the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, meeting at Cincinnati, Ohio — February 4, 1955

I. Living Together in a Divided World

Our ultimate objective in international relations is a world order which sustains creative good and a world community.

In contemporary international relations there exist situations of tension which always contain the potentialities of war. This makes it necessary to accept both expedient measures for security and imperfect arangements in order to prevent overt hositilties. In this respect, "coexistence," i. e. living together, is an objective both morally and practically preferable to a state of irreconcilable hostility, intolerance, and mutual destruction.

But coexistence may be sought in a variety of patterns, ranging from "cold war" to "appeasement." We reject the latter as a denial of our responsibility for justice and for the welfare of our neighbors. We believe that we should, with wisdom and dignity, seek to lessen the tensions between the nations.

Recognizing that divisions exist, particularly between the totalitarian powers and the more "free" or "open" societies, we declare our conviction that even in this situation governments and peoples cherishing diverse economic and political systems can and must learn to exist side by side in "peaceful competition with a sincere commitment to growing cooperation." We strongly urge our government to explore every means of furthering this cooperation, and particularly to use the United Nations increasingly as a means for mutual helpfulness among the peoples of the world. Such use would provide concrete evidence of the willingness of the United States to work in partnership with other nations.

As Christians we are loyal to certain principles and would heartily endorse the following extract from the statement of the Evanston Assembly:

> We stand against submission to, engulfment by, or appeasement of totalitarian tyranny and aggression. We also stand against the exploitation of any people by economic monopoly or political imperialism. In the world community we must stand for the freedom of all people to know the truth which makes men free and for the basic civil liberties of all people to struggle for a higher freedom . . .

Such living together does, however, require that certain minimum conditions be met on both sides:

1. A conviction that it is possible for nations and peoples to live together, at least for a considerable period of years.

2. A willingness not to use force as an instrument of policy beyond the existing frontiers. This would not mean the recognition and freezing of present injustices and the unnatural divisions of nations, but it would mean renouncing coercion as a means of securing or redressing them.

3. A vigorous effort to end social and other injustices which might lead to civil, and hence international, war.

4. A scrupulous respect for the pledged word.

5. A continuing effort to reach agreement on outstanding issues, such as the peace treaties and disarmament, which are essential to a broader stabilization and pacification of relations.

6. Readiness to submit all unresolved questions of conflict to an impartial international organization and to carry out its decisions . . .

For the Christian the ecumenical fellowship of the churches is evidence of progress toward this goal, and of God's use of the Christian Church as one of the foundation stones of the world order. Further, by its supranational character the Church also provides the point of meeting where the search for the truth as it is in Christ in its bearing on all the problems of human society may be pursued in faith and hope as well as in love's creative power.

II. The United Nations and the World Community

The United Nations was created in response to the longing of the peoples of the world for a just and durable peace. As Christians we believe that the purposes set forth in its Charter are in accordance with God's will for justice among all his children. It is therefore our Christian duty to study the structure of the United Nations, to examine the issues which are brought before it, and to pray and work unceasingly for the attainment of its objectives.

In the relatively brief period since its founding, much good has been accomplished through the United Nations. Political settlements have been facilitated in Indonesia and Greece. Hostilities have been halted in Palestine and Kashmir. Collective action has been taken against aggression in Korea. Specialized agencies of the United Nations are carrying on a broad campaign against poverty, ignorance and disease.

Despite the divisions in the world community as an aftermath of war, the United Nations has made significant contributions to order and justice. Its meetings have provided for continuing diplomatic contacts before the bar of world public opinion, and the United Nations General Assembly has provided a forum for the discussion of international tensions and problems.

Any hope of progressive development toward greater effectiveness depends largely upon the continuation of a realistic appraisal of the United Nations. This applies also to the question of Charter review. The wisdom of pressing for such a review at the present time is open to question. There is not now the same measure of unanimity which was present at the time of the adoption of the Charter. To press for fundamental changes in the Charter at this time may therefore result in disrupting rather than strengthening the United Nations.

Certain powerful groups and individuals believe that our nation should withdraw its support if its policies are not followed by the United Nations. We cannot share this view.

Unfounded criticism by use of falsehood, half-truths, and distortions could undermine the steady progress being made to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations. Churchmen and church agencies must be vigilant to offset this threat with a ministry of truth.

The churches exert a strong influence on public opinion. We therefore call upon them to accept the responsibility of dealing fairly with the United Nations, neither claiming too much for it and thus raising false hopes, nor dismissing it as irrelevant in the world of nations today. Christians ought to study and to support the United Nations as an important instrument of the nations through which God's will for community, justice, and freedom on earth may be advanced.

III. China and the United Nations

For Americans the question of seating the representatives of Communist China in the United Nations is largely a moral one. Since many regard membership as implying a nation's willingness to be judged before the bar of international justice and compliance with required standards of conduct; and since the United Nations has found Communist China to be the aggressor in Korea, and its government has shown little disposition to meet its international responsibilities, the conclusion from these premises is the exclusion of Communist China from the United Nations.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the United States recognizes the Nationalist Government and has not recognized the Communist government.

Whether the United States should recognize the Communist government of China, and under what conditions, is a complex problem. Involved in it is the question whether recognition implies approval or simply the fact that a government is in effective control. In any case, there is always the possibility of change.

We believe (1) that adoption of a rigid attitude will not best serve the interests of the United States or the cause of peace; (2) that our government should explore every possible means of opening doors of communication, looking toward a just and wise settlement of existing difficulties. This calls for a measure of flexibility and a readiness to negotiate.

IV. The Control and Reduction of Armaments

The tension and insecurity in our world has led the nations into an armament race that is both burdensome and frightful. The weapons created by man's knowledge and ingenuity have, in turn, increased anxiety and suspicion. In this situation we must work both for the settlement of differences and for the reduction and control of armaments by international agreement through the United Nations.

We urge our government to continue to press for effective international control of atomic and hydrogen weapons, of other means of mass destruction, of conventional armaments, and of fighting forces as well. Such control would reduce the economic burden and the political hazard represented by present armaments.

Since even the testing of our nuclear weapons represents a potential danger to people and their food supply, as well as to the surrounding land, sea, and air, we endorse the recommendation of the Section on International Affairs at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches that nations carry on tests only within their own territories or, if elsewhere, only by international clearance and agreement.

V. Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy

We support the proposal made by President Eisenhower to the United Nations that the nations having atomic materials contribute to a common stock-pile for peaceful and constructive uses. We are grateful that certain other governments have acted favorably upon this proposal.

We urge support of well-considered efforts increasingly to use this new source of energy for the well-being of mankind.

VI. Sharing Our Resources for World Development

To Christians it is axiomatic that "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." Nations, no less than individuals, are required to render account of their stewardship. We have, accordingly, been gratified at the recognition given this principle by the projection of programs of technical and economic assistance, looking to the development of those lands which have not shared fully in the production of food, industrial power, and other goods as well as in the modern world's potential of health, wealth, and knowledge.

These programs, presently carried on not only through agencies of the United Nations, but also by the United States Government through bilateral agreements, are highly commended. On the one hand, the sharing of knowledge, the training of persons in medical, educational, agricultural, industrial, and administrative skills, and the investments of funds for projects that will raise the standard of living is of permanent benefit to the less-developed nations. It serves to relieve these peoples not only from needless hunger and suffering, ignorance and disease, but also from the despair and rankling sense of injustice which breeds instability, hostility toward the more favored peoples, and a receptivity to destructive ideologies. Technical assistance spells dignity and hope for millions of potential beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the sharing of our resources through technical assistance and economic development has profound value for a nation like our own. It affords a practical outlet for our historic belief in the basic dignity of all men and their right to enjoy the blessings of this world. It means that positive helpfulness, even more than the deterrent power of our arms, may become the symbol of our mission in the world. Technical assistance is therefore for us, in the best sense of the word, "in the national interest."

In common with other Christian bodies, we are troubled by some of the pitfalls which threaten this program. One danger lies in a too exclusive involvement with immediate considerations of American foreign policy. We do not object to the recognition that technical development may save certain nations from the threat of Communism and thus contribute to our own security. This is a desirable result. Nor do we complain that some programs of economic assistance go hand in hand with military and other forms of mutual security measures. It is inevitable that welfare and security considerations should overlap. We do, however, warn against the temptation of making our assistance conditional upon the recipient's entry into military alliances or the acceptance by other nations of our postion in specific details of international policy. The failure to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable security implications may vitiate the program and seriously weaken its potential result.

Again, we regret that there is so little support for the technical assistance program of the United Nations. We are aware that some bilateral programs must be continued by mutual agreement with the parties concerned. We advocate that more of our total technical assistance program should be channeled through the United Nations.

Most of all, we are disturbed by what appears to us as a tendency to deemphasize the entire technical assistance program. The proposed discontinuance of the Foreign Operations Administration has aroused a general fear that the United States is prematurely abandoning its historic mission and responsibility. We earnestly urge the President and the Congress to make certain that adequate provision for continued and growing economic and technical aid be made and generously supported after June, 1955.

VII. World Community Means World Trade

Whether or not we are to realize a world community, living in peace and freedom, depends to a very large degree upon relatively free and mutual exchange of the goods and services essential for human survival and well being. The modern world is knit together economically.

It is cause for satisfaction that successive administrations, Democratic and Republican, supported by the responsible elements in both major parties, have recognized the importance of a policy of reciprocity and the lowering of barriers in international trade. We urge our people to recognize that if the United States is to be a prosperous producer and exporter of goods, we must be willing to import and buy the products of other nations as well.

We urge the President and the Congress to work courageously for the extension of reciprocal trade agreements, for the lowering of tariffs and other barriers to international trade, for the simplification of customs, classifications and procedures, and for full participation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Additional copies of this Statement may be secured at 5 cents, ten or more, 3 cents each, from the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25 Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio

Action Notes: For Pastors, Committees, and Christian Citizens

Most of this issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY has been given over to the text of an important statement adopted by the Commission on Christian Social Action on the subject, "Christian Commitment and the World Community." This statement endeavors to lift out of the maze of current problems of foreign policy a few central concerns to which Christians as individuals and as members of church groups should give primary attention. It is being submitted to the synods of the church for thoughtful consideration at their spring meetings.

Keep this issue where you can refer to it frequently. It will be one of the resources in our denomination-wide Emphasis on Christian Commitment and Christian Community this coming autumn. It can be used to good effect in evaluating legislation and other developments on the national horizon, and in taking action at the appropriate time.

LIVING TOGETHER

Encourage our officials to strive patiently to settle peacefully the issues that separate us from other nations. Support them when, as in the Formosa crisis of January, they act with moderation. On the other hand, when political leaders, publicists, or other influential citizens encourage provocative actions, or oppose responsible negotiations, speak up for moderation.

THE UNITED NATIONS

Do newspapers or groups in your community vilify the UN? Get the facts before them — through letters to the editor, suggested speakers, and pamphlet literature. *What is Your UN-Q?* (5c), *The United Nations: Facts and Fallacies* ($1 per hundred), and *The Churches and the United Nations* (15c) are among many resources available from the Commission on Christian Social Action. The December, 1954 issue of *Social Action* magazine has an excellent article on the question of Charter Review. The Bureau of Audio-Visual Aids has a number of films and film-strips that show the UN at work.

When the appropriations bills come up, urge Congress to meet our full obligations to the regular UN Budget ($13.7 million), to the specialized agencies (roughly $11 million), and to the special programs. All of these commitments last year amounted to $92,656,461 or only *56 cents per person.*

We should continue our contributions to the Children's Fund ($12.5 million last year) and make provision also for the UN High Commissioner of Refugees whose emergency fund the last session of Congress turned down.

CHINA

This is a difficult question. Study the Commission's statement carefully. Weigh all sides of the problem. Remember that in a democracy our government's willingness and ability to negotiate depends on informed and sane public opinion.

CONTROL OF ARMAMENTS

Encourage persistent efforts to bring armaments under effective control. Watch the proceedings in the UN. Let the State Department know of your concern.

ATOMIC ENERGY

The "atoms for peace" plan occasioned one of the few unanimous actions which has come out of the UN within recent years. Besides its potential medical uses, atomic energy may prove to be one answer for underdeveloped areas which lack coal and water for generating electrical power.

WORLD DEVELOPMENT

In 1954 Congress allocated $289.5 million for economic aid and technical assistance conducted by the Foreign Operations Administration. It is difficult to see how we can do any less in 1955.

During the same session, Congress appropriated $9.9 million for UN technical assistance to cover 1954 commitments only, but failed to appropriate an additional $8 million requested by the President for the first half of 1955. To make matters worse, Congress prohibited the United States delegate from making any commitments at the annual "pledging conference" when members of the UN assume their obligations for the UN Expanded Technical Assistance Program. Congress should take action to appropriate the $8 million already authorized for the first half of 1955, and to appropriate approximately $25 million *for the next eighteen months* so that our delegates can go to the pledging conference in November with authority to assume our full obligation.

WORLD TRADE

The House of Representatives has passed H.R. 1 embodying the President's recommendations to extend for three years his authority to enter into Reciprocal Trade Agreements. The bill defines the limits within which tariff reductions may be negotiated and continues existing provisions whereby trade concessions may be withdrawn if domestic industry would be seriously injured. The bill is now before the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Harry F. Byrd, Chairman. Persons supporting this legislation may write to Senator Byrd or to any other member of the Committee, as well as to their own Senators.

NRP—IS IT UMT?

H. R. 2967 currently before the House Committee on the Armed Services would put into effect what the Department of Defense calls its new National Reserve Plan. It would permit the induction of a limited number of young men into a six-month period of military training to be followed by nine and one-half years in the Reserve. It would also tighten up Reserve requirements of weekly and summer service under both the present Selective Service program (extended for four years under H. R. 3005) and the new Plan.

The Pentagon has denied that NRP is UMT. On the other hand, the strengthened military control over the lives of citizens following their period of active service raises serious questions. Indeed, the confusion arising from contrary claims made for the proposal is regarded by some as a telling reason for opposing the plan.

A memorandum suggesting questions in the light of which manpower legislation might be evaluated may be secured on request from the office of the Commission on Christian Social Action.

KEEPING INFORMED

Pastors and social action committee chairmen last month received two tools which should be kept for continued use in dealing with public affairs. One is **Register Christian Opinion** (10c, $3.50 per 100), which lists the members and committees of Congress. The other is **Stop, Look, Listen** (5c, $2.50 per 100), containing an excellent listing of magazines, newspapers, Radio and TV programs that will give you reliable information on current affairs. Additional copies may be secured at the prices quoted.

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